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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 007038

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SUBJECT: DEFENSE AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION AGREEMENT
INSPECTIONS, NOVEMBER 23 AND DECEMBER 6-10, 2004

REF: 2003 ANKARA 7157

Classified By: Political Military Counselor Tim Betts, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: The annual Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement (DECA) inspections occurred on November 24 in Ankara and the week of December 6-10 in Izmir and at Incirlik Air Base outside of Adana. Due in part to new leadership and attitude on the Turkish side and a new US strategy, and in a noted contrast to previous years, the talks were cordial and cooperative, even during discussions on historically contentious issues. At Incirlik, it was agreed that many small issues could be resolved by the local commands, and exchanges on the top three issues were limited. Discussion on the Turkish request to formalize an agreement on dependent hires and the Army/Air Force Postal Office (APO) was deferred to a later meeting and Turkish authorities expressed satisfaction with informal arrangements made to address their concerns regarding Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) officers carrying weapons off-base and liaising directly with the Jandarma. Progress was noted on issues of hiring the disabled and landfill clean-up. To address discrepancies between the Turkish and US ammunition accounting methods, the US team offered to assist in the upgrade of the Turkish computerized system. In Izmir, the relocation of 425th AB offices from the Hilton Hotel to Bayrakli Park for Force Protection reasons raised Turkish concerns regarding the carrying of weapons by U.S. personnel at Bayrakli. Turkish authorities characterized all of these issues as minor but urged both sides to cooperate to resolve them in a timely manner. End Summary.

2. (C) New TU Leadership: Major General Sefer Ozturk, who took over as head of the Turkish General Staff (TGS) J-5 Agreements Department in September, set the tone for the 2004 DECA inspections during the Ankara inspection of the Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC) facility and the Ankara Support Facility at Balgat Army Base when he said that the meetings were not part of an inspection but rather a cooperation visit to discuss progress. He repeated this characterization at Izmir and Incirlik. His staff, led by Col. Yasar Karacoban, appeared to have gotten the message, were generally courteous and showed greater flexibility in resolving issues such as the APO agreement and the AFOSI weapons usage than previously offered. None of the top three issues - 1) Dependent Hires (American dependents working on base), 2) an APO agreement and 3) AFOSI personnel carrying weapons off-base and talking directly to the Turkish Jandarma without permission from the Turkish Base Command at Incirlik - were discussed at length and none were referred for more senior consideration.

3. (C) US Strategy: A change in the US strategy may also have contributed to the success of the 2004 inspection. While agreeing to accept the Turkish olive branch offered by General Ozturk, the US team brought a list of US concerns to the table -- a departure from past practice. These included Turkish constraints on Incirlik base access; cost implications of the Buy Turkish First provision; requirement for original signatures on NATO orders; Host Nation approval requirements; theft of US property from the base; AAFES concessionaire rental requirements; and use of Incirlik's EOD range. Another request, to base the US C-12 at Esenboga Airport in place of Guvercinlik was deferred to a separate meeting in Ankara at Turkish request. This strategy allowed the US to hold the floor for a good portion of the inbrief and diverted some Turkish energy to researching the issues. Additionally, the US side took the Dependent Hire and APO issues off the table at the inbrief by requesting separate meetings on each issue in Ankara and offering specific meeting dates in early 2005.

4. (C) The Big Three: While there had been little progress to resolve the Dependent Hire, APO and OSI issues since the 2003 DECA inspection (reftel), the expectations of the Turkish side appear to have slightly softened. On the Dependent Hire and APO issues, Col. Karacoban and MFA Second Secretary Ali Riza Guney said the Turkish government was not

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looking to impose new restrictions on the US operation but only to place these operations within a legal framework as required by Turkish law. Guney was particularly interested in the US APO operation, including the route for items entering and leaving Turkey and the security precautions

taken during transit from Istanbul to Adana and other locations. A discussion of the process at the Incirlik APO clarified that APO items all enter Turkey through Istanbul, not through multiple entry points as Turkish officials had assumed. Guney commented to Deputy PolMilCouns that the APO issue should be easy to solve. He acknowledged, however, that the Dependent Hire issue was more intractable since Turkish law requires all foreign workers to have approved work permits. The US is unwilling to cede authority to the Turkish government to determine whether or not the base can employ an American. On the OSI issue, an informal system in which AFOSI notifies the MFA in advance that it plans to carry weapons off-base in support of a protective detail has met with tacit Turkish approval and AFOSI efforts to deepen relations with the Jandarma have been well-received. While the Turkish working group members agreed to consider this issue closed, others in the Turkish delegation commented that the issue had been raised to a "higher level" and was out of TGS hands. However, neither the Embassy nor ODC has been contacted by other officials regarding this matter.

15. (C) Bayrakli Park: Following the November, 2003 Istanbul bombings, a decision was made to move the 425th Air Base offices from the Hilton Hotel in Izmir to Bayrakli Park. Security precautions at Bayrakli were correspondingly increased. During the inspection, Col. Karacoban and others expressed surprise at seeing US armed security guards at the entrance of the compound. They further questioned the US rationale for keeping the US security threat level at Charlie when the TGS threat level was at Alpha. LTC Ozan Ozken from TGS Security questioned whether the US was withholding intelligence that might cause the Turkish side to change its threat level. Col. Karacoban stated that, under DECA Supplementary Agreement 3, Number 5, which pertains to activities outside of the specific Turkish installations covered under Article One of the agreement, the Turkish government must give approval for US personnel to carry weapons. The US side disputes this point and will respond accordingly to a TGS complaint, if submitted.

16. (C) Final Report: In its final report of the meetings, TGS acknowledged the "positive approach of the US side on carrying weapons off-base and contacting TGS." While noting some other steps taken by the US side to address local concerns at Incirlik and Izmir, the report gave scant acknowledgment to the concerns raised by the US side and, in the case of base access, suggested that US personnel needed additional training on the rules and rights pertaining to base access under the DECA. In no case, did TGS take full responsibility for identifying a solution. While the report, as read, did not give as accurate an accounting as the US side would like, General Ozturk ended the session on a positive note by saying that none of the issues presented were big problems but they shouldn't be left unresolved and calling on both sides to be constructive and open to dialogue. Additionally, Col. Karacoban expressed his pleasure with the cooperation and coordination shown during the inspection.

17. (C) Comment: The significant shift in tone during the 2004 DECA inspection was likely the result of a confluence of factors. The first sign of change may have been the TGS decision in September to take the bilateral High Level Defense Group (HLDG) process away from the J-5 Agreements Department, which was very focused on perceived US non-compliance with the DECA, and give it to the Strategy Department headed by MG Cengiz Arslan. As a result, the DECA discussion during the HLDG Political Military Working Group meeting on September 24 was marginalized, which could signal a TGS decision to elevate and broaden the bilateral security relationship and put the DECA issues in the appropriate context. General Ozturk's concerted effort to reach out to the US delegation during the DECA meeting was welcome, and appeared to have had a positive impact on Col. Karacoban who, in the past, appeared almost bitter about what he perceived as US neglect of its DECA obligations. His agreement to meet in early 2005 to discuss the APO and Dependent Hire issues is hopeful. However, the outcome of those meetings will better indicate whether the positive tone set at the DECA inspections reflects a genuine interest in resolving outstanding DECA issues and moving our security relationship to a higher plane.

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